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THE SIGN OF INTERROGATION IN GREEK MINUSCULE MANUSCRIPTS

BY CHARLES BREWSTER RANDOLPH

The punctuation in Greek minuscule manuscripts strikes one as *varium et mutabile semper*, if not within single manuscripts, at least when several are compared, and this is doubtless one of the reasons why marks of punctuation are so seldom recorded in the critical editions of Greek authors. Sometimes a sign takes on more than one function in the same manuscript, as, for example, the comma and the point in its low and its middle position in the scholia of Aristophanes in the Ravennas manuscript.¹ Frequently, on the other hand, it happens that in spite of the very great number of punctuation-marks in a manuscript, in many instances where punctuation is required it is altogether missing.² It is perhaps impossible to arrive at any broad and definite conclusions regarding the use of the high, middle, and low point, and even the comma, but it is possible to detect in many manuscripts a definite rule regarding the use of the sign of interrogation—a rule whose employment, if we may judge from its frequency in the limited number of manuscripts of which facsimiles are at our disposal in America, appears to have been very common, if not the general practice in the writing of minuscule manuscripts.

The paleographers, like Wattenbach and Gardthausen, have little to say about punctuation by points. Regarding the use of the question-mark they inform us that a sign of interrogation first occurs in the eighth or ninth century; that it has several forms; that the point and comma in combination (our semicolon), which is the commonest sign of interrogation, occurs also in places where it does not denote a question.³ Zacher, in the preface to his edition of the

¹ Rutherford *Scholia Aristophanica*, I, xxix.

² See, for example, Tischendorf *Monumenta Sacra Inedita, Nova Collectio*, II, xxxxi.

³ Wattenbach *Anleitung zur griechischen Palaeographie* (1895), 60, 121; Gardthausen *Griechische Palaeographie*, 276.

Equites of Aristophanes,¹ observes that all the Aristophanes manuscripts employ the point and the sign of interrogation, but often omit both, and often put the point after a question instead of the sign ; .

In examining a manuscript of Aristophanes some time ago I was struck with the persistence, as it were, with which the question-mark, disappearing after indicating one or two questions, and apparently given up by the scribe, appeared again, then apparently dropped out of use, and reappeared. I began to observe the form of the question and compare this with the sign at the end. A score of tests at the beginning of the *Aves* gave a good indication that there was method in the use of the sign.

The principle that I want to establish first is this: *The sign of interrogation does not follow questions introduced by an interrogative pronoun or adverb* (for example, τίς, ποῦ, πῶς). These I shall speak of as "word-questions."

I first arrived at this conclusion by examining the punctuation of all the questions in a considerable portion of four of our best minuscule manuscripts. These were Ravennas (R) and Marcianus 474 (V) of Aristophanes, Laurentianus xxxii. 9 (M of Aeschylus and L of Sophocles), and Oxoniensis Clarkianus 39 of Plato; to which I added a Harvard manuscript of the gospels, thinking that in the Bible if anywhere the scribe would understand what he was writing, and the manuscript would therefore exhibit faithfully his system of punctuation. This examination yielded results as follows:

Manuscript	Symbol and Author	Parts Examined	Word-Questions	Times ; occurs
Ravennas (XI)*.....	R of Aristophanes	<i>Aves</i> entire	197	0
Marcianus 474 (XII)	V of Aristophanes	<i>Aves</i> entire	199	7
Laurentianus xxxii. 9 (X or XI) }	M of Aeschylus	<i>Prom. Vincet., Agam.</i>	74	0
Ox. Clark. 39 (IX)...	L of Sophocles	<i>Antig., O. C. 1-525</i>	118	2
Harv. Gospels (XII or XIII).....	B of Plato	<i>Euthyphro, Lysis</i>	100	0
		About 80 MS pages	46	2
Totals.....			734	11

*The Roman numerals indicate the century to which the manuscript is assigned.

¹ P. xix: *Interpungunt omnes (codices) puncto * et signo interrogationis ; sed utrumque saepe omittunt et in interrogatione punctum ponunt.* The reference is to Zacher's revision of Velsen's edition, Leipzig, 1897.

It should be remarked that in these and all the other manuscripts that I shall cite in support of this principle the question-mark is in use, and has no function aside from that of indicating a question.

Facsimiles of the first four manuscripts are accessible in phototypic reproduction, and for the fifth I had the original manuscript. The only other complete manuscript facsimile accessible to me in which the point and comma appear commonly in combination was Parisinus 2934, Σ of Demosthenes, in which the sign plainly has not interrogative value.¹ I therefore turned to the examination of such facsimile sheets as I could find containing passages long enough to provide a test.

Fortunately I was able to avail myself of photographic facsimile sheets in the Harvard Classical Library containing passages of considerable length from twenty minuscule manuscripts, to which I have added seven photographic facsimiles of the *Aves* of Aristophanes, which Professor John Williams White kindly loaned me. For convenience I have classified these by centuries.² The names of these twenty-seven manuscripts, with the results of my examination of them, appear in the table on pp. 312 f.

¹See the full discussion of this below, pp. 316 ff.

²The classification by centuries has no particular significance. It is a difficult or impossible task, especially in a photographic or phototypic facsimile, to determine how much of the punctuation is by the original hand; this matter must be carefully worked out in the case of each manuscript, and this paper does not take into account the hand who wrote the sign of interrogation, attempting to show simply what we may expect to find in a manuscript today. When I speak of "the scribe" in connection with the punctuation I mean the person who inserted the signs referred to, whether the first, second, or a later hand.

Not every one of the manuscripts can be assigned with certainty to the century under which it is entered. In doubtful cases I have chosen the latest date.

MANUSCRIPTS BY CENTURIES *			Word- Questions	Times ; occurs	Sentence- Questions	Times ; occurs
THIRTEENTH CENTURY						
Parisinus 2712.....	{ A of Aristophanes	<i>Aves</i> 1-200	36	0	29	14
	{ P (or A) of Sophocles	<i>O. C.</i> 1-525	52	0	34	26
FOURTEENTH CENTURY						
Farnesianus I. E. 5	h of Aeschylus	<i>Agam.</i> 1-448	11	0	3	2
Marcianus 468†....	{ B of Aeschylus	<i>Agam.</i> 1-348	9	0	3	1
	{ V of Sophocles	<i>O. C.</i> 1338-1514	16	0	5	0
Laurentianus xxxi. 15	Γ of Aristophanes	<i>Aves</i> 1-200	37	4	31	26
Ambrosianus L 39 sup.	M of Aristophanes	<i>Aves</i> 1-200	36	0	28	4
Urbinas 141.....	U of Aristophanes	<i>Aves</i> 1-200	37	0	28	0
Laurentianus xxxii. 2.....	L of Euripides	<i>Herc. Fur.</i> 1-165, 328-480, 607-828, 1166-1219	27	0	14	7
Palatinus 287†.....	{ G of Euripides	<i>Herc. Fur.</i> 1-155, 318-462, 625-847, 1143-1224, 1232- 1251				
	{ Vat. of Sophocles	<i>O. C.</i> 1-217	35	0	11	0
Laurentianus xxxi. 10.....	L ² of Sophocles	<i>O. C.</i> 1-124	22	0	13	7
FIFTEENTH CENTURY						
Laurentianus xxxi. 8	f of Aeschylus	<i>Agam.</i> 1-407	10	0	4	3
Marcianus 616.....	{ g of Aeschylus	<i>Agam.</i> 1-45, 1095- 1673	43	0	19	5
	{ V ² of Sophocles	<i>O. C.</i> 122-319	20	0	14	5
Guelferbytanus ...	b of Aeschylus	<i>Agam.</i> 1-310, 1067- 1159; <i>Choeph.</i> 8-37	26	0	8	3
Marcianus 222.....	Aeschylus	<i>Agam.</i> 1-310, 1067- 1085	12	0	4	2
Marcianus 475.....	G of Aristophanes	<i>Aves</i> 1-200	36	3	28	20
Estensis 3 D 8.....	E of Aristophanes	<i>Aves</i> 1-200	37	1	29	19

* This table anticipates the second part of my paper in giving also the statistics for the use of the interrogation-mark after sentence-questions, but considerable space is gained by presenting both sets of figures at once. In the case of Urbinas 141, Vaticanus graecus 2291, and Brussels 11343, the Sophocles passage from Marcianus 468, and the Euripides passage from Palatinus 287 the figures are not included in the totals, since the interrogation-point is not found in the parts of the manuscripts upon which the statistics are based. The facsimile sheets of all these manuscripts except those of Aristophanes were examined in full.

† Some parts of these manuscripts contain the interrogation-point, while other parts do not; see the figures in the table. This probably indicates that the work of inserting the sign was begun by a later hand and not finished. These two manuscripts, as well as Parisinus 2712 and Marcianus 616, contain plays of more than one dramatist.

MANUSCRIPTS BY CENTURIES			Word- Questions	Times ; occurs	Sentence Questions	Times ; occurs
FIFTEENTH CENTURY— <i>Continued</i>						
Palatinus 67.....	Vp2 of Aristophanes	<i>Aves</i> 1-200	33	1	29	6
Parisinus 2386.....	F of Sophocles	<i>O. C.</i> 1-158	16	0	8	5
Parisinus 2787.....	B of Sophocles	<i>O. C.</i> 1-172	16	0	9	3
Parisinus 2711.....	T of Sophocles	<i>O. C.</i> 1-59	7	0	3	2
Farnesianus II. F. 34.....	Sophocles	<i>O. C.</i> 1-37, 57-76	5	0	6	4
Marcianus 617.....	Sophocles	<i>O. C.</i> 1-79	11	0	6	4
Marcianus 470.....	Sophocles	<i>O. C.</i> 1-83	11	0	7	4
Vaticanus graecus 2291.....	Chigi Sophocles	<i>O. C.</i> 1-84	11	0	6	0
Brussels 11343.....	Br of Sophocles	<i>O. C.</i> 1-139	13	0	7	0
SIXTEENTH CENTURY						
Riccardianus 34...	R of Sophocles	<i>O. C.</i> 1-46	6	0	3	1
Escorial I. Ω . 9....	Sophocles	<i>Antig.</i> 1241-1353; <i>O. C.</i> 1-212, 318-371	35	0	17	7
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY						
Riccardianus 77...	R ² of Sophocles	<i>Electra</i> 1490-1510; <i>O. C.</i> 1-8, 661-683	9	0	5	4

Of the twenty-seven manuscripts in this list, twenty-four contain the point and comma in combination in the function of interrogation-mark and no other. Summing up the statistics in the case of the individual manuscripts we have the following totals:

		Times ; is used
Word-questions in the 24 manuscripts.....	577	9
Adding to these the figures obtained from the five manuscripts previously cited.....	734	11
	1,311	20

This is surely sufficient evidence to establish the fact regarding word-questions as I have stated it. The twenty exceptions noted are accidents, and in the case of some of them the reason for the mistake is evident.¹

¹For example, in the passages examined in the Harvard manuscript of the gospels $\tau\iota\varsigma$ is twice followed by the interrogation-mark (Matt. 7:9, 7:10); but each time a relative clause stands between $\tau\iota\varsigma$ and the concluding words of the sentence, which begin with $\mu\eta$ in the sense of *num*, a word regularly followed by the sign of interroga-

If the sign of interrogation is used in a manuscript without any function other than that of indicating interrogation, and is not used with word-questions, it must be used with questions of the other sort, sentence-questions, which are introduced by particles like *ἀρα*, *οὐ*, *μή*, *μὲν*, or have no interrogative particle, like *Aves* 1: *Ὁρθὴν κελεύεις, ἦ τὸ δένδρον φαίνεται;*—"Straight on, you say, where the tree appears?" Now we cannot expect to find any such uniformity in the employment of the sign after questions of this sort as in the case of word-questions, for two good reasons: (1) a great proportion of these sentences may be read either as question or statement, e.g., the verse just quoted: "Do you say go straight ahead, where the tree appears?" or "You say go straight ahead, where the tree appears"; (2) anyone, whether he knows much or little Greek, can recognize a question-word like *τίς* or *ποῦ* or *πῶς*, but he must be able to understand the sentence in the majority of cases in order to punctuate a sentence-question correctly. This we know the scribes often could not do.

To return to our manuscripts. The first five cited, which I examined at greater length, give us the following information in regard to the use of the sign with sentence questions:

Manuscript	Symbol and Author	Parts examined	Sentence-Questions	Times ; occurs
Ravennas	R of Aristophanes	<i>Aves</i> entire	142	65
Marcianus 474	V of Aristophanes	<i>Aves</i> entire	140	91
Laurentianus	M of Aeschylus	<i>Prom. Vinct.</i> , <i>Agam.</i>	38	26
xxxii. 9	L of Sophocles	<i>Antig.</i> , O. C. 1-525	90	60
Ox. Clark 39	B of Plato	<i>Euthyphro</i> , <i>Lysis</i>	208	104
Harv. Gospels		About 80 MS pages	36	33
Totals			654	379

Pursuing the investigation through the twenty-four manuscripts of the twenty-seven of which shorter facsimiles were accessible to me,¹ we find:

tion. In such instances, indeed, one would probably be justified in classing the question as a sentence-question, in which event it would not constitute an exception to the rule at all.

¹The figures in the individual manuscripts are shown in the third and fourth columns of the table on pp. 312 f.

		Times ; occurs	Per- centage
Sentence-questions in these facsimiles.....	359	188	
Adding to this the figures obtained from the five manuscripts previously cited.....	654	379	
	1,013	567	56

We may therefore confidently say that the scribes or other persons who punctuated a large proportion of our Greek minuscule manuscripts intended to employ the sign of interrogation after what we call sentence-questions, but not after word-questions, or in other words that the sign of interrogation was used where no *word* in the sentence would have made it clear to the reader that a question was intended.

There is of course no way to tell on this side the water how large a percentage of existing manuscripts exhibit the application of this rule, nor would it, I think, be worth while for one person to extend the investigation much farther. It will be very easy for anyone beginning work on a manuscript with whose punctuation he is unfamiliar to test the application of the rule for himself. In the course of this investigation I have examined all the minuscule facsimiles, complete and partial, that have been at my disposal, thirty-four in all. In none of these thirty-four did I find the sign of interrogation in use in a way that contradicts the rule, and in twenty-nine of them I found the sign that is identical with our semicolon, or a slight modification of it—the use of *two* points and a comma, for example—in use according to the rule. The other five manuscripts, which do not contain the semicolon with interrogative value, are

- Venetus A of the *Iliad*
- Urbinas 141 of Aristophanes (XIV)
- Brussels 11343 of Sophocles (XV)
- Vaticanus graecus 2291 of Sophocles (XV)
- Parisinus 2934 of Demosthenes (X)

The manuscript of the *Iliad* (Venetus A) is punctuated simply by points, and no effort is made to distinguish questions from state-

ments. The facsimiles of two others of the five just cited show the *comma* in use in interrogations according to the rule:¹

Manuscript	Author	Parts examined	Word-Questions	Times , occurs after questions	Sentence-Questions	Times , occurs after questions
Brussels 11343	Sophocles	<i>O. C.</i> 1-139	13	0	7	7
Urbinas 141..	Aristophanes	<i>Aves</i> 1-200	37	2	28	13

The fourth manuscript, Vaticanus graecus 2291, of Sophocles, gives in the small facsimile some slight evidence of the use of the comma with interrogative value, but pending an examination of a larger portion than the 84 verses of the Harvard facsimile it must be classed with the *Iliad* manuscript above as wanting the interrogative sign.

The fifth manuscript, Parisinus 2934, Σ of Demosthenes, is one in which the use of the semicolon caused me, like Tischendorf in the examination of its use in a certain uncial manuscript of which I shall speak later, *multum negoti*.² The semicolon not only stands occasionally after word-questions, but also in many places where it is impossible to read any question at all. The solution of the matter, however, becomes clear upon careful examination of the punctuation in different parts of the manuscript. I selected seventy pages for

¹This may, of course, be accidental; there is no way to determine absolutely whether or not the comma was meant for a sign of interrogation in these manuscripts. It certainly is often used in them where it is not interrogative (19 times in the verses contained in the facsimile of the Brussels manuscript, 23 times in the verses examined in U), though this does not preclude its having interrogative value elsewhere; see note 1, p. 309. It is noteworthy that in the Brussels facsimile five of the seven commas used after questions are large, forming a flattened half-circle with the horns in line with the tops and bottoms of the letters without stems, like *o* and *ω*; those used elsewhere in the facsimile are generally smaller.

The possibility that the comma may have interrogative value in these manuscripts suggests the question whether the original sign of interrogation in many manuscripts is not really the simple comma, the semicolon arising when a later hand added the comma to a previous dot or dots. Whether the comma alone ever had this value or not, it is certain that the interrogative sign in some manuscripts was formed by a later hand in this way; for example, in the Oxford Plato: see the description of the punctuation in Plate 81, facsimiles of the Paleographical Society; Gardthausen *Griechische Palaeographie*, 276; and compare such forms of the question-mark as *· · · · ·*; occurring in the published phototypic facsimiles (examples in *Antigone* 47, 449, 510, 734, 1048, in L; *Prometheus* 378, 835, 972 in M).

²*Monumenta Sacra Inedita*, V, xvii.

this, the first twelve and a half (containing the first two *Olynthiacs*), and others at intervals throughout. It soon became evident that the occurrence of the semicolon in the manuscript is closely connected with that of the comma. At the beginning of the manuscript they are both very common; further over they are both rarer; finally they seem both to be given up entirely. The following table shows the number of times that commas and semicolons occur in these seventy pages:

	Begins on folio in Σ	Pages in Σ	Questions in Dindorf-Blass	; in Σ corre- sponding	; where not in Dindorf-Blass	, and point in form resem- bling ;	Number of times ; occurs	Number of times , occurs
<i>Olynthiac</i> 1.....	1	6	8	2	13*	4	15	20
<i>Olynthiac</i> 2.....	5	6½	3	0	5	17	5	24
<i>De Chersoneso</i>	18	14	42	2	1	2	3	4
<i>De Pace</i>	29	5	4	0	0	0	0	4
<i>De Corona</i>	157v	24½	36	0	0	0	0	3
<i>In Cononem</i>	389	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals.....		70	93	4	19	23	23	55

* In two of these instances it is possible to read a question.

My conclusion is this: The original scribe, and perhaps the first corrector, used the high, middle, and low point. Then came a later hand using the comma. He began to insert it very frequently, as we see from the record in *Olynthiacs* 1 and 2; then abandoned his original plan, inserted fewer commas, and perhaps finally left off altogether: my examination of the manuscript was not extensive enough to make me certain about this. He did not confine himself to places where there was no mark of punctuation, but freely added the comma where the high, middle, and low point already stood: this is proven by the difference in color of ink of point and comma in many places, and by numerous combinations such as ., ,. , ' where the point and comma are not in the same vertical line, where they are in line horizontally, etc. Where the comma was thus freely added, it was inevitable that the semicolon should result in many places, and a few times this has occurred where a question ends. The semicolon in the manuscript therefore does not have

interrogative value; it is simply an accidental combination of point and comma.

This disposes of all the minuscule manuscripts to which I have had access. None of them shows any contradiction to the rule stated.

The use of a question-mark in uncial manuscripts is very rare, and it may be doubted whether in any of those which exhibit it it dates from the first hand. I have found good evidence of its occurrence in only two uncial manuscripts.¹

Tischendorf, in his *Monumenta Sacra Inedita*,² gives transcripts of two biblical manuscripts in uncials dating from the eighth or ninth century, in which the semicolon occurs as a sign of interrogation. It is in one³ of these that he says that the semicolon made him *multum negoti*: that although in many places it is intended to denote a question, it is also found where there is none. The transcript contains 364 pages, 131 of which I examined very carefully.⁴ The examination yielded the following figures:

		; used after
Word-questions. . . .	69	4
Sentence-questions .	71	17

The figures given show that the manuscript is imperfectly punctuated;⁵ the punctuator does not seem to intend to use the sign of interrogation after word-questions. The 131 pages contain the semicolon in no instance where the words which it follows may not

¹The author of the preface to the facsimile of the Fragments of the Illustrated *Iliad* (*Homeri Iliadis Pictae Fragmenta*) remarks on p. 18 that he has noted the comma in the manuscript, and also the comma with the point above it, forming ;. I have been unable upon careful examination of the text to recognize any trace of the semicolon in the facsimile.

²*Nova Collectio*, Vols. II and V.

³*Epistolae Pauli et Catholicae Palimpsestae*, in Vol. V.

⁴Time failed me for completing the examination, which, however, hardly promised to be worth while, as any attempt to account for possible irregularities must be based upon evidence which a transcript cannot furnish.

⁵The problem of the punctuator in uncial manuscripts was much more difficult, because he lacked the accents to show him whether words like *τις*, *που*, *απα*, *η*, were interrogative or not.

be read as a question, and I am inclined to think that the inconsistencies which troubled Tischendorf were accidental. Mistakes are as easy to make in punctuation as in the use of words and letters. In the other manuscript,¹ the transcript of which I examined entire, the use of the sign of interrogation does not conform to the rule for minuscule manuscripts. Without seeing at least a facsimile, it is idle to speculate as to the reason why. Possibly the interrogation marks were inserted after the present practice of ending *all* questions with the sign became established. When this was may perhaps be determined by an examination of early Greek printed texts, for the earlier books exhibit to some extent at least the punctuation that I have shown to exist in manuscripts.

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¹The Bodleian *Genesis*, in Vol. II.